

## ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

Official Publication of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Vol. 43, No. 1

Urbana, Illinois

October, 1955

Published every month except June, July, August, and September. Subscription price, \$2.00 a year; single copies, 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter October 29, 1941, at the post office at Urbana, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Editor, J. N. Hook, University of Illinois. Co-editor, Wilmer Lamar, Decatur Senior High School. Communications may be addressed to J. N. Hook, 121 Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois.

## Determining an Efficient Teaching Load in English

A Report to Secondary School Administrators, Based  
on a Study Sponsored by the California  
Council of Teachers of English

By WILLIAM J. DUSEL

*San Jose, California, State College*

Previous studies of working conditions in secondary schools have apparently failed to reveal any pressing need for revision of teaching load in the various subject areas. Teachers of all subjects report—and their reports are confirmed by their administrators—an average work week of from 40 to 50 hours. The "Survey of Teachers' Work-Week in California High Schools," for example, conducted in 1950 by the Bureau of Education Research of the California State Department of Education, reports the average work week of English teachers to be 46 hours and 15 minutes, only slightly higher than the average. A related study of the junior colleges (published in *California Schools*, April, 1953) finds the language arts teachers' work week to average 49 hours and 1 minute, exceeding the faculty average by 2 hours and 35 minutes, and proving substantially longer than the averages of all other departments.

*Although most ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN articles are written by Illinois teachers, the editors have reached outside the state for this one, which they consider one of the most significant the BULLETIN has ever printed. Certainly Mr. Dusel's recommendations are no less pertinent to Illinois (or any other state) than they are to California.*

*A copy of this BULLETIN is being sent to each junior and senior high school principal in Illinois, because administrators as well as teachers will want to know the facts in Mr. Dusel's article. Additional copies for school boards, parent groups, and the like are available at twenty-five cents each.*

But such inequalities as these are admittedly slight: they can be remedied by excusing English teachers from chaperoning school parties or officiating at night football games. And most secondary school administrators are willing to make such adjustments in the belief that they are thereby keeping the work week of English teachers in line with the rest.

In so doing, however, they are perpetuating the myth that "the working load of English teachers is not much heavier (and certainly not *enough* heavier to justify extra staff) than the working load of any other teachers." Such a belief is unsound because conventional surveys of teachers' work-weeks mean no more than would time scores on a cross country race in which individual runners had been assigned separate courses of various distances over different terrains. No matter how accurately measured, these time scores would show only how long each man took to arrive at the finish line. They would not indicate how far he had run, or how fast, or what obstacles he had surmounted—or avoided. One might reasonably expect that each runner, aware of the inequality of the assigned courses, would manage, somehow, to get home before nightfall.

Similarly, teachers will work at their jobs as much as seems the general practice, and will stop working before exhausted. A close similarity of work weeks is to be expected in any business where a large part of the duties is left to the discretion of the worker.

Furthermore, the basic assumption of the traditional teaching-load survey is questionable: all the teachers whose work-weeks are reported are assumed to be completely, or at least equally, successful in carrying out their responsibilities. Or, to put it another way, the number of hours spent each week *on* the job is taken to be synonymous with the number of hours needed to *do* the job. Is it true that teachers of all subjects are equally successful in bringing all their pupils up to a level of competence which satisfies the expectations of the public or the demands of a democratic society?

Teachers of most subjects in secondary school seem able to teach most of their pupils all that the community expects: teachers of biology, industrial arts, music, history, and physical education, for example, seem to produce results which satisfy the public, without having to exceed a forty-five hour week. English teachers, however, working even longer hours, have been publicly criticized for years, in community after community in California, for their inability to prepare more than half of the one third of all high school graduates who go on to college, to pass their college entrance examinations in English. The percentage of non-college-bound graduates who would be judged literate by such standards would



undoubtedly be much smaller. Assuming for the moment that Subject-A examinations (emphasizing, as they do, the writing of a well-organized 500-word composition free from gross errors of spelling, punctuation, and grammar) are fair indicators of literacy, then the public has every right to question the efficiency of a teaching program that brings only one sixth, fifth, or even a fourth of our high school graduates to competence in the use of their native language. English teachers realize, as well as anyone else, how essential is competence in language to a democratic citizen, why failures in this area are so conspicuous and greeted with such alarm; and they admit that they are not doing the kind of job that the public has every right to expect.

Several reasons for this situation are frequently suggested. One which is most tempting to administrators is that the expectations of our colleges are unreasonable, that they demand more than should be expected of young people of normal intelligence. The inadequacy of this explanation, however, is apparent in the equally loud criticism of the language competence of high school graduates which comes from parents and employers.

Another explanation could be that English teachers are incompetent, or at least not as efficient as teachers of, say, mathematics or typing, about whom little criticism is heard. But an examination of the professional training and personal qualifications of the English faculty of any secondary school would reveal the unsoundness of such a theory.

A third explanation seems necessary. The English teacher may be expected to teach *so much to so many* that he cannot possibly do a thorough job in a forty-six hour week. If this can be shown, the fact that the work-weeks of all secondary school teachers compare as closely as they do is no indication that their teaching assignments are of equal difficulty.

The kind of study needed by secondary school administrators, then, is one which determines exactly what is involved in teaching the basic communication skills, and the amount of time required by the English teacher to teach these skills efficiently, under classroom conditions, to pupils of normal intelligence. With these facts, the administrator can determine the average number of pupils that the average English teacher can reasonably be expected to instruct.

The California Council of Teachers of English has sponsored such a study. In order to determine the best means of improving the effectiveness of classroom teaching in English, the reasonableness of the present teaching load, and the adequacy of teacher-education programs, four hundred and thirty experienced teachers,

representing one hundred and fifty communities throughout the state, reported on their own professional preparation in English, their departmental organization, objectives, teaching responsibilities and pupil load, working conditions, texts, library facilities, and methods of evaluation. They also marked pupils' compositions and timed their work.

From the body of facts, opinions, and work samples thus collected, it was determined, first, that English teachers believe they have at least ten different responsibilities. Seven they hold in common with teachers of other subjects (teaching critical thinking, good citizenship, etc.); and three they hold virtually alone—teaching the skills of oral and written communication and the appreciation of literature. It was next determined, from a job-analysis of these 430 teaching positions, exactly what is involved in the effective teaching of *one* of these skills, on the secondary level. This report summarizes those findings of the survey which establish the time required of an English teacher to develop pupils' competence in *written composition*—and to do it effectively in mass education.

### 1. Secondary school pupils need continual, supervised practice in written composition throughout their required years of English.

✓ The Harvard Report *General Education in a Free Society* recommends "constant practice" as essential to improve writing in secondary schools. The experimental research of Lokke and Wykoff, reported in the *Review of Education Research*, measured the effect of increasing the amounts of writing practice: doubling it reduced failures 66% and improved grades 60%. The California Council survey collected the opinions of 430 experienced teachers and nationally known teacher-educators concerning the *approximate amounts* of writing practice that were considered necessary to develop the average pupil's competence in written expression in secondary school. These teachers believe that different grade levels require slightly different amounts of practice, from 150 words a week for freshmen to 350 words a week for seniors. They also observed that individual differences among pupils will justify more practice for some, less for others. *But the overall average amount* ✓ *recommended by most teachers is 250 words each week for each pupil.* Many recommend that some writing be done daily.

In order to ensure that the habits which become fixed by means of this practice shall be desirable ones, most pupils need guidance and supervision. Over 90% of the English teachers in the Council



survey believe this is most efficiently done by marking compositions. They point out that the ideal form of supervision does not require marking—namely, the private conference with each pupil on his compositions. But because the typical secondary school English teacher has five or six daily classes of thirty or more pupils each to instruct, he cannot offer very much of this kind of service. Instead he must read his daily accumulation of papers after school hours, when pupils are not about; and he must depend on brief written comments to communicate his reactions and suggestions.

**2. The amount of time needed by the English teacher to supervise pupils' writing practice varies directly with the effectiveness of the supervision.**

The 430 teachers participating were asked to mark a sample high school composition just as they did their own pupils' papers, and to record exactly how much time they took, working as rapidly as possible, to read, mark, and grade the paper. The corrected compositions were then analyzed according to the purpose, style, and effectiveness of the marking, and time norms were determined.

Those findings of special interest to English teachers have been reported in an article, "Some Semantic Implications of Theme Correction," to be published in *The English Journal* later in 1955. The examples of marking techniques on pages 6 to 13 indicate the wide variation in practice that was found in the Council study. Teachers who were concerned solely with the pupil's mistakes in mechanics (as illustrated by the first three types of marking) required consistently less time to read and mark than those who showed concern for the writer's ideas and who attempted to help him understand his writing problems.

*The administrator, in studying these different ways of marking papers, should try to imagine how much growth in writing power can reasonably be expected of pupils after three or four years' exposure to each method.*

## I. MARKING TO ASSIGN A GRADE

### "One Hectic Day"

To start this out, I guess I had better back up a little. Last week end, some friends, my parents, one of my girlfriends, and I, went up to the snow. My parents decided that instead of trying to battle the traffic on the way home Sunday we would leave early Monday morning and be home by 11 o'clock. So we got up at six in the morning so we could have breakfast before leaving. We finally got away at 7:15 and hadn't been gone over an hour when I noticed there was quite a bit of blue smoke coming out of the tail pipe. I mentioned it to my Dad, but he just kept on driving. We passed a Gas Station but he wouldn't stop, so about ten minutes later the car started missing and more exhaust came out of the tail pipe. Then Dad decided to stop. When he stopped and put the hood up the smoke was so bad that you would have thought there was a miniture bonfire there in the motor.

My Dad just stood there for a few minutes and shook his head. None of us were intrested in saying I told you so. Then he waved a passing car down and asked them if they would mind, when going into the first town, to get us a tow truck as we were having trouble with our car. They said, "No, they wouldn't mind," so off they went.

There we sat, out in the desilate country with nothing around us but fields, with a few scattered cows and chirping birds in the trees.

In about an hour we saw a big tow truck coming down the

The teacher marking a student's composition in this way is obviously interested in doing only one thing: assigning a letter grade to the work. But the grade is practically worthless, because it was not based on a careful reading of the paper, as the oversights demonstrate. Those errors which are marked are not the most serious. Note how the misspelled "intrested," the ungrammatical "they would mind . . . to get us a tow truck," the unconventional capitalization, the indirect quotation enclosed in quotation marks have all been ignored. And the one comma that the teacher inserts is possibly the least important one on the page. Notice the real need for a clarifying comma four lines later after "put the hood up."

Note also the complete absence of any mark or comment to suggest to the writer that his "hectic day" was appreciated by the reader or that his ideas were even heard.

How much improvement in writing can a pupil whose efforts are supervised in this way be expected to show? What chance is there that this pupil's next attempts will be any more successful, or satisfying, than this one?

The average time required to mark 250 words of manuscript in this way was 3.5 minutes. The time required to correct a week's supply of such papers (150 being the mode pupil load established in the Council survey) would be 8.8 hours.



## II. MARKING TO INDICATE FAULTS

### "One Hectic Day"

*weak opening sentence*  
*rep. p.*  
*d.*  
*p.*  
*awk.*  
*d.*  
*d.*  
*cap.*  
*caps*  
*w.w.*  
*w.w.*  
*p.*  
*sp.*  
*d.*  
*cap.*  
*agr. p.*  
*ref.*  
*awk.*  
*p.*  
*dir quot.*

To start this out, I guess I had better back up a little. Last week end, some friends, my parents, one of my girlfriends, and I, went up to the snow. My parents decided that instead of trying to battle the traffic on the way home Sunday we would leave early Monday morning and be home by 11 o'clock. So we got up at six in the morning so we could have breakfast before leaving. We finally got away at 7:15 and hadn't been gone over an hour when I noticed there was quite a bit of blue smoke coming out of the tail pipe. I mentioned it to my Dad but he just kept on driving. We passed a Gas Station but he wouldn't stop, so about ten minutes later the car started missing and more exhaust came out of the tail pipe. Then Dad decided to stop. When he stopped and put the hood up the smoke was so bad that you would have thought there was a miniture bonfire there in the motor.

*cap.*  
*agr. p.*  
*ref.*  
*awk.*  
*p.*  
*dir quot.*

My Dad just stood there for a few minutes and shook his head. None of us were intrested in saying I told you so. Then he waved a passing car down and asked them if they would mind, when going into the first town, to get us a tow truck as we were having trouble with our car. They said, "No, they wouldn't mind," so off they went.

*undveloped paragraph*  
*sp.*

There we sat, out in the desilate country with nothing around us but fields, with a few scattered cows and chirping birds in the trees.

In about an hour we saw a big tow truck coming down the



This teacher is obviously conscientious: he has marked almost every clear error in spelling, punctuation, and grammar, and has furthermore pointed out every idiom and choice of words that offends him. Because of the cold, impersonal tone of the clipped abbreviations and symbols, the writer may wonder whether his paper has been read by a human being or processed in a correcting machine.

But note that again the teacher has made no comments to the writer on the ideas expressed, on what the pupil was trying to say. The only reasonable inference that could be drawn would be that the teacher was much more concerned with how the pupil wrote than with what he wrote.

But most undesirable in this method of shorthand marking is the prevalence of unexplained judgment words: "weak opening sentence," "awkward" sentence, "undeveloped" paragraph. The writer is told only that he has failed, and that he has given a clumsy and immature performance of writing, but he is not shown how to improve. Has any diver or dancer or swimmer ever been helped by being told merely that he was "awkward"? Obviously only the mature pupil would be interested in finding out why he was considered weak and what could be done about it. The others would be more inclined to give up.

The average time required to mark 250 words of manuscript in this way was 5.9 minutes. The time required to correct a week's supply (150) of papers would be 14.8 hours.

### III. MARKING TO CORRECT

## "One Hectic Day"

Recopy this and  
turn it in on  
Friday

~~To start this out, I guess I had better back up a~~  
~~little.~~ Last week end, some friends, my parents, one of  
my girlfriends, and I, went up to the snow. <sup>we all enjoyed ourselves</sup> My parents <sup>thoroughly</sup>  
decided that instead of trying to battle the traffic <sup>until we</sup> ~~on~~ <sup>started home</sup>  
~~the way home.~~ Sunday we would leave early Monday morning <sup>Then things</sup>  
and be home by 11 o'clock. <sup>happen.</sup> So we got up at six in the <sup>and started for home.</sup>  
~~had a quick~~ morning so we could have breakfast, before leaving. <sup>up</sup> We  
~~finally got away at 7:15 and~~ hadn't been gone ~~over~~ an hour  
when I noticed there <sup>a stream</sup> ~~was quite a bit of~~ blue smoke coming  
out of the tail pipe. <sup>exhaust of the car.</sup> I mentioned it to my Dad but he just  
kept on driving. We passed a Gas Station <sup>This and I reminded him</sup> but he wouldn't  
stop. <sup>again,</sup> About ten minutes later the car started missing  
and more <sup>smoke poured</sup> ~~exhaust came~~ out of the tail pipe. <sup>only did</sup> Then Dad decided  
to stop. When he ~~stopped and~~ put the hood up, <sup>great clouds of</sup> the smoke  
<sup>poured out as if</sup> ~~was so bad that you would have thought there was~~ a miniture  
<sup>was</sup> bonfire there in the motor.

My Dad just stood there for a few minutes and shook his head. None of us ~~were~~ <sup>was</sup> interested in saying I told you so. Then he waved a passing car down and asked ~~them~~ <sup>the driver</sup> if ~~they~~ <sup>he</sup> would mind, when going into the first town, ~~to~~ <sup>getting</sup> let us a tow truck, as we were having trouble with our car. ~~They~~ <sup>The driver</sup> said, "No, ~~they~~ <sup>he</sup> wouldn't mind," so off ~~they~~ <sup>he</sup> went.

There we sat, out in the desolate country with  
nothing around us ~~but fields,~~ with a few scattered cows in the fields  
and ~~occasional~~ <sup>occasional</sup> flying by.

In about an hour we saw a big tow truck coming down the



This teacher corrects the paper, literally: he strikes out irrelevant passages, rewrites ineptly expressed sentences, fills in necessary transitional material, corrects misspellings and faulty punctuation. There is a positiveness and finality in the marking that suggests that there is only one right way to say anything, and the teacher has demonstrated that way—an assumption that the facts rarely justify. This teacher might be considered to be a better writer than teacher, however; for although he knows when a sentence is not quite right, he doesn't seem to know how to make the writer understand why. In effect he attempts to teach writing by asking the class to watch him and try to imitate what he does.

There is nothing left for the writer to do with his corrected paper but look at the grade (presumably for the paper as it appeared before correction), assume that the composition is now perfect, and so recopy it in his notebook for display during "Public School Week." The pupil's continued interest in the act of writing is essential to his growth in language power; the effect of such marking on his interest in ideas and in critical thinking is not hard to imagine.

The average time required to mark 250 words of manuscript in this way was 5.9 minutes. The time required to correct a week's supply would be 14.8 hours.

#### IV. MARKING TO TEACH WRITING AND THINKING

*Is your title really a quotation?*  
"One Hectic Day"

*Find the one word in this phrase that makes the whole first sentence unnecessary.*

*How many separate ideas have you crammed into this one sentence?*

*Why would a comma here be helpful to the reader?*

*Are these their exact words?*

*I like this part! Tell us more. How did the others act?*

To start this out, I guess I had better back up a little. Last week end, some friends, my parents, one of

my girlfriends, and I went up to the snow. My parents decided that instead of trying to battle the traffic on

the way home Sunday we would leave early Monday morning

and be home by 11 o'clock. So we got up at six in the morning so we could have breakfast before leaving. We

finally got away at 7:15 and hadn't been gone over an hour

when I noticed there was quite a bit of blue smoke coming

out of the tail pipe. I mentioned it to my Dad but he just

kept on driving. We passed a Gas Station but he wouldn't

stop, so about ten minutes later the car started missing

and more exhaust came out of the tail pipe. Then Dad decided

to stop. When he stopped and put the hood up the smoke

was so bad that you would have thought there was a miniature

bonfire there in the motor.

My Dad just stood there for a few minutes and shook

his head. None of us were interested in saying I told you

so. Then he waved a passing car down and asked them if

they would mind, when going into the first town, to get us

a tow truck as we were having trouble with our car. They

said, "No, they wouldn't mind," so off they went.

There we sat, out in the desolate country with

nothing around us but fields, with a few scattered cows

and chirping birds in the trees.

In about an hour we saw a big tow truck coming down the

*What parts of your sentence does this comma separate? C- (idea) C- (method)*

*It certainly must have been a hectic day. Fred. try to make your reader appreciate the bad it really was. Suggesting*

*Tell more the hectic details; omit the unneeded*

*Make your sentences so to read by putting one main*

*in each, and by providing each phrase with an antecedent*

*Please get those cows down out of the trees!*



This teacher has read the composition carefully enough to discover the writer's purpose and plan, to appraise his successes and failures, and to determine what this particular learner is ready to try next. Then he has formulated comments designed to communicate this information to the writer.

The teacher's concern for the writer's ideas is shown in his respectful response to them and in his requests for more information. Often a question is posed to point out the writer's failure to make himself clear.

The teacher manages to find something good in the paper: he shows his appreciation of the occasional efforts of the pupil to create a mood or convey an image. Suggestions for improvement are offered, not dogmatically, but reasonably. The teacher gives the writer problems to think through in order to correct or improve his own work, so that the reasons for recommended changes are understood.

Finally he attempts to direct the energies of the pupil by giving him a few basic points to keep in mind on his next exercise.

This kind of individualized instruction obviously stimulates interest in writing and in thinking. The teacher is as much concerned with the pupil's thoughts as with the mechanics of his writing, and attempts to guide the development of both.

The average amount of time required to mark papers so as to show concern for ideas and to teach writing and thinking was 8.6 minutes per 250 words. The total time required to mark a week's supply of 250-word compositions in this way would be at least 21.5 hours.

### **3. Teachers report great difficulty in reading and marking compositions during school hours.**

So-called "free periods" are used for extra-curricular affairs, clerical work, or administrative duties, or are constantly interrupted in other ways; they are therefore not available for correcting time. In addition, the intense concentration required to understand, analyze, and judge essay material, and to compose clear and helpful comments, is apparently impossible to maintain in most classrooms during school hours.

Twenty-five per cent report absolutely no correcting during school hours can be done under existing conditions of instruction; 35% report that they can find only 1 to 3 hours of time per week for this work; 28% report from 4 to 6 hours are available for correcting during school hours. The average number of hours available during the school week for correcting of compositions is *2.7 hours*. Compare this figure with the number of hours required to mark one short composition from each pupil. It is clear that almost all of the English teacher's correcting of compositions must at present be done after school hours.

### **4. Graded compositions glanced at by the pupil and thrown away, or rewritten incorrectly, are of little educative value.**

The experienced teachers in the California Council survey recognized the necessity of checking compositions a second time, after pupils have corrected or revised them; 93% of all the teachers state that checking pupils' corrections is essential; and of the teachers with 20 or more years of experience, 96% are of this conviction.

Obviously this checking of pupils' corrections adds more hours of paper work to the English teacher's after-school responsibilities. The average time required to check over a pupil's corrections is estimated at 2.8 minutes per 250 words. Thus the total time required to check the corrections of 150 pupils would be *7 hours*.

### **5. The concern shown here for numbers of words of composition should not be interpreted to mean that mere practice in writing leads inevitably to learning to write well.**

✓ The preparation and motivation of a class for a writing experience are equally as important as the opportunity to write. But these are complex matters of technique, requiring of the English teacher imagination, academic competence, and careful lesson planning, and cannot be discussed here. The findings of the California Coun-



cil study concerning the best ways to motivate pupils' compositions are reported in a separate article, "The Writing Program Must Go On—Somehow," *Scholastic Teacher*, February 2, 1955. Valuable suggestions for organizing a writing program in the secondary school are given in the N.C.T.E. publication *The English Language Arts*, J. N. Hook's *The Teaching of High School English*, Lou LaBrant's *We Teach English*, Lucia Mirrielees' *Teaching Composition and Literature in Junior and Senior High School*, and Robert Pooley's *Teaching English Usage*.

It should be remembered that effective lesson preparation demands more of the English teacher's free time. He must prepare to teach two of the three R's, plus the oral skills of communication. He is expected to draw upon the literary heritage of America, England, and, to an increasing extent, the world. He must take increasing notice of the mass media of communication and keep himself informed on the state of our living language. But so wide are the variations in the amount of time needed by a successful teacher to prepare for his daily classes that norms seem impossible to determine. It is clear, however, that the burden of class preparation increases with the number of *different* preparations which the teacher is required to make daily.

**6. Totaling the hours required for these duties indicates the magnitude, in work hours, of the job of teaching writing effectively, under present conditions of instruction, in California secondary schools.**

25.0 hours per week of assigned English classes (the mode class load)

21.5 hours of marking compositions (to teach writing and thinking)

7.0 hours of checking the corrections or revisions of these compositions

---

53.5 hours per week

less 2.7 hours available for correcting during class hours

---

total 50.8 hours of academic work per week required to meet classes and mark compositions effectively

plus ? hours for lesson planning and preparation for teaching the other skills and knowledge expected of the English program.

**7. If the teaching of writing in California secondary schools is to be improved, immediate changes in administrative policy are necessary.**

English teachers have all the kinds of responsibilities of teachers of other subjects (preparing daily lessons for five different classes, making out and grading quizzes and examinations, handling extra-curricular activities, and performing clerical duties) *plus* the reading and marking of a steady stream of written compositions from their pupils. Their present work week, generous as it is, is obviously inadequate to enable them to do the job expected by the public and required by a democratic society. They either reduce the amount of writing expected of their pupils until satisfactory development is impossible, or they mark papers so hastily and superficially that the pupils receive little instructional benefit.

Until English teachers are given a workable teaching load, they will continue to be forced to cut corners—and inevitably at the expense of the writing program.

**8. A revised English program is needed to develop the writing competence of all secondary school pupils.** As an alternative to last-minute or senior English “cram-courses,” some such program as the following is indicated by the findings of the survey:

- A. Full-time English teachers would be assigned a teaching load of four daily one-hour classes of 25 pupils each. Such a load is admittedly only two-thirds of what present practice calls for, but it can be seen to be justifiable for teachers of writing.
- B. English teachers would be expected to give regular assignments in written composition, throughout all the years of required English. Seventh, eighth, and ninth graders would write approximately 100 words each week; tenth graders approximately 200 words; eleventh and twelfth graders approximately 350 words a week. Teachers would not, of course, emphasize numbers of words in making their assignments; nor would they make weekly writing a mechanical, perfunctory, or monotonous ordeal of “Friday themes.” Writing activities would be varied and purposeful.
- C. English teachers would also be assigned two daily one-hour “composition-reading periods,” interspersed among the class hours, to be used primarily for reading and marking the required compositions. Teachers would be encouraged to mark papers for ideas, organization, and style as well as for mechanics; and they would check corrections regularly.



- D. Writing would not, of course, become the sole concern of these English classes. The regular course of study, including attention to all the communication skills and to literature, would be followed.

Such a program as outlined here would give English teachers a work-week of from 40 to 45 hours, a load comparable to that of teachers of other subjects. But most important, it would enable English teachers to do what is expected of them: to bring *most* of our young people, not merely the gifted, to full competence in language by the time they have finished secondary schooling.

9. The California Council study found sufficient evidence of misunderstanding and dissatisfaction to justify the following additional recommendations to administrators who wish to improve the quality of English instruction in secondary schools.

- A. *Leadership*: There is an evident need for the administrator to convince his English teachers, and indeed, all of the faculty, that he is genuinely interested in the language arts program of the school. He should take a strong stand, repeatedly, on the need for total faculty cooperation in maintaining high standards of English usage in writing and speaking. Other departments need not be expected to teach good English but consistently to expect it and to give it recognition.

In return the administrator has a right to expect from his English faculty a clear and comprehensive statement of language arts objectives and curriculum through all the years of secondary school.

- B. *Supervision*: Constant supervision of language arts teachers is desirable to ensure that philosophy and enlightened theory are carried out in practice. At the same time, if the administrator will remember the teaching load that the English teacher is attempting to carry, he will treat shortcomings and inadequacies with sympathetic counsel and supplementary training rather than with fault-finding or threat of dismissal.
- C. *In-Service Education*: The full report of this aspect of the California Council study has appeared in a separate article, "In-Service Education for the Language Arts," *Educational Administration and Supervision*, 1955. The report lists the kinds of in-service training most frequently requested by English teachers, and outlines ways of setting up an in-service

program organized around a language arts committee drawn from the entire faculty.

- D. *Library and Textbook Facilities:* The library, once the heart of an educational institution, is apparently one of the last items to be considered in many school building programs or in annual school budgets. Language arts teachers are the ones most handicapped by this shift in values. Literature provides the idea content of English; and while anthology-type texts provide a valuable minimum of literary selection at low cost, a library well stocked with interesting, attractive, and worthwhile books on a wide range of subjects is necessary if English teachers are to individualize instruction in reading and to guide the development of reading tastes.

In recommending annual appropriations of school funds for library construction and maintenance, administrators should remember the dependence of the English program on books.

- E. *Extra-curricular Assignments:* Because so many school activities are forms of language arts (drama, forensics, newspaper, annual, even the parliamentary procedure and group dynamics of student government), the administrator is inclined to rely on English teachers to supervise them. He can now see that almost half the duties of a teacher of writing are of necessity extra-curricular—that is, the marking of hundreds of pages of manuscript a week.

As often as possible, the status of regular classes should be given to such activities as dramatics, forensics, journalism, and yearbook activities, so as to include them clearly in the work-week of the teacher.

- F. *Class and Pupil Load:* One obvious consequence of the present pupil-class loads of California English teachers has been the curtailment of the writing program; 77.5% of the teachers participating in the Council survey report that neither their administration nor their department requires any specified amount of composition work to be assigned. These teachers have been free to assign as much or as little writing as they wish. As pupil-class loads and extra-curricular duties have become heavier, composition assignments have become less frequent and the marking of papers has become increasingly hasty and superficial.

Writing instruction will not be improved, of course, by administrative demands for sufficient weekly composition



practice. As long as the present conditions of English instruction remain unchanged, increasing the number of compositions which the English teacher must assign can only result in decreasing the amount of time that he can spend reading each one; and marking of compositions, to be instructional, has been shown to require even more time than most teachers are able to spend at present. A real solution, therefore, calls for a marked revision of the English teacher-pupil ratio.

English teachers must have smaller classes, fewer classes, and more time scheduled for marking compositions—not primarily to shorten their work-week, but rather to ensure that their pupils become proficient in writing their native language.

The inevitable question arises: "How can we afford more English teachers?" The answer can only be that literacy is a first essential, not a luxury, in a democracy. People responsible for teaching such important and complex skills as reading and writing should be assigned only the number of pupils that they can teach effectively. The essential work of marking weekly compositions severely limits this number.

### **Are You a Member of I. A. T. E.?**

With the sole function of helping teachers of English to do their work effectively, the Illinois Association of Teachers of English deserves the support of every English teacher and every school. The membership fee, \$2.00 annually, pays for eight issues of the *Bulletin* and the other expenses of the organization. Each new member is sent a free copy of the literary map of Illinois. In addition, he is entitled to submit some of the best writing of his students for consideration in the two issues of the *Bulletin* devoted to that purpose.

One of the oldest of teachers' groups, the I.A.T.E. is now in its forty-third year. It is a Class A affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Send your check to Illinois Association of Teachers of English, 204-A Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois. If you are a new member, please ask for your free literary map.



## I. A. T. E. Conference for 1955

Plan now to attend the annual meeting of I. A. T. E., co-sponsored by the University of Illinois Department of English and College of Education. At this conference on October 21 and 22, many of the meetings will be held at the Illini Union in Urbana.

The committee takes pleasure in announcing a stimulating conference program. The Executive Council will meet Friday morning at 9. During the conference, arrange to visit the exhibits of the Illinois State High School Press Association newspapers and yearbooks and also the exhibits of the N. C. T. E. and the I. A. T. E. materials.

At the general session on Friday from 1:30 to 5:00 P.M., the annual business meeting will be followed by a brief report concerning the brochure on the standards in freshman English composition at the University of Illinois by Dr. Charles Roberts. Dr. Robert Faner of Southern Illinois University will discuss the neglected American drama, *Francesca da Rimini* by Boker. The steps in the teaching of Shakespeare will be presented by Dr. Robert Blair from Eastern Illinois State College.

Again the Friday dinner features an outstanding program. There will be greetings from Dr. David Dodds Henry, president of the University of Illinois, and music by the Modern Choir from Eastern Illinois State College. Dr. Alfred L. Crabb, professor emeritus of George Peabody College and historical novelist, addresses the group on "I Take My Pen in Hand."

The Saturday morning session, from 9 to 10, continues the emphasis of the conference on writing with a symposium: "Developing Competence in Student Writing." Helen Stapp from Decatur will act as chairman. Phases to be presented will be "Writing for the Gifted," Verna Hoyman from Normal; "Sentence Analysis by Means of Logical Symbols," Dr. Chenault Kelly from Eastern Illinois State College; and "Evaluating Student Writing," Margaret Newman, from Elgin.

From 10:15 to 11:30, discussion groups with a leader aided by several assistants will offer varied choices. In addition to groups on the symposium topics, these groups are scheduled: school publications, led by Clarence Hach; successful writing programs, by Barbara Garst: using library facilities, by Ruby Mann; new teaching tools, by Dr. J. N. Hook; planning resource units, by Emma Mae Leonhard; a program for the non-college students, by Morris Finder; the language arts and other subject areas, by Florence Cook; and human relations in the teaching of English, by Wilmer Lamar. Space does not permit the naming of the additional twenty-five or more top-notch participants.

Dr. Henrietta C. K. Naeseth of Augustana College will speak at the Saturday luncheon on "Mississippi River Lore and Legend."

For reservations, please address Mr. Byron E. Fulk, Conference Supervisor, 725 South Wright Street, Champaign. Price of the dinner will be \$2.25. Price of the luncheon will be \$1.50. Please enclose your check for your meal tickets. There is no registration fee. Write directly to a hotel or motel for a room reservation—and do it early. The Inman Hotel and the Tilden Hall in Champaign and the Urbana-Lincoln in Urbana are popular. Less expensive are the Ford and Hamilton in Champaign. New motels are Chief Illini and Motel Mercer in Urbana, Motel Thomasboro in Thomasboro, John's Motel in Savoy, and Champaign Tourist Court and Penny's Motel in Champaign.